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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: DASD WARLICK'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BOKERIA

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Mary Warlick, accompanied by the Ambassador, met May 8 with Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria to discuss bilateral issues and review military assistance programs. The meeting provided an opportunity for Bokeria to discuss the ongoing political situation in the country and the government's plans for resolving the ongoing conflict with the non-parliamentary opposition. Bokeria questioned DASD Warlick about the possibility of an ISAF supply route through Georgia, and noted his view that Turkmenistan was a very viable partner in this plan. Bokeria described Georgia's positive view of the European Partnership that was signed May 7 in Prague, the multinational missions currently in Georgia, and Russian accusations about Georgian interference in an overflight of supplies to Afghanistan. Bokeria asked DASD Warlick about NATO/Georgian relations and the situation surrounding the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and passed on his suggestions for negotiating with the Russians in upcoming talks. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Deputy Minister Bokeria began the meeting by expressing his gratitude for U.S. economic and military education assistance to Georgia, and noted that Georgia remained committed to support a Georgian troop deployment to Afghanistan. He inquired about the status of an Afghan supply route through Georgia, and noted, after DASD expressed our interest in diversifying supplies to ISAF as much as possible, that Georgia believed Turkmenistan was a highly viable partner that should be taken seriously. He stated that Turkmenistan has a "healthy rift" with Russia, and is more capable of handling Russian pressure than Kyrgyzstan. Commenting on the Eastern Partnership signing May 7, Bokeria said that the wording was "not the best," and was a bit too conservative for Georgia; however, it was a political declaration and it was an important demonstration of cooperation with the European Union. He also noted that the Eastern Partnership was highly positive because it included President Lukashenko of Belarus in the process, and provided him another opportunity to balance his competing interests. In response to a question about Georgian/European relations, he stated that Georgia did not have any complaints about the Czechs in their handling of the EU presidency, and that the Georgians were already working to build relations with the Swedes as the next EU presidency. Bokeria stated that the Swedish Foreign Minister was a "great friend" of Georgia, and a principled minister.

¶3. (C) When asked about Georgia/NATO relations, Bokeria stressed that there had been no change in the Georgian position advocating membership in NATO, and that the NATO/Georgia Commission was a success. He candidly noted that the government understood the need for more reforms, and that major obstacles remained before Georgia could legitimately claim a seat at the table in the Council. Deputy Minister Bokeria asked about the CFE treaty, inquiring about a Russian non-paper passed to the State Department. In

Bokeria's opinion, the Russian proposals were just another attempt to bolster its desires for spheres of influence in the world, and was a "non-starter." He expressed regret that the EU was not treating it as such, but stated his appreciation for the US including Georgian comments and positions in its non-paper. He stated that he was Qpositions in its non-paper. He stated that he was comfortable with the US' need to negotiate on this issue with Russia; however, he strongly noted that it should be taken independently of other negotiations and cautioned that we not allow the Russians to use it as a bargaining chip for larger bilateral negotiations.

¶4. (C) Bokeria spoke frankly about the upcoming Geneva talks and the consistent threats of non-participation by South Ossetia and Abkhaz de facto negotiators. He stated that the participation of officials from the separatist zones did not matter, and Georgia was interested in direct talks with Russia. He expressed some worry about the Russians possibly boycotting the talks, but at this point they were continuing to plan for discussions about new security arrangements in the separatist zones. Regarding UNOMIG, Bokeria again stated his concern with the wording of the title of the UN Secretary General's May 15 report, and that any step backwards from "Abkhazia, Georgia" would be a step towards accepting Russia's "new reality." He noted that such a step back would be to fall for "open blackmail," send a "very dangerous signal," and would confirm Moscow's ability to dictate its positions to the international community. He adamantly noted that the international community's desire to come to some consensus is not helpful, as it emboldens the Russians to continue pressing; instead, the western nations should continue to place pressure on Russia to abide by its

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statements and agreements signed in the past.

¶5. (C) In response to Russian statements denouncing Georgian interference on an overflight ostensibly from Sweden of supplies to ISAF, Bokeria stated that the government always runs cursory checks of the companies involved to ensure no illicit activity takes place. The investigation had raised Georgian suspicions about the flight, and thus Georgia did not grant overflight permission. Separately, Bokeria believed that the Minister of Defense would be traveling to the US in early June and would be available to further discuss these issues.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador raised the issue of ongoing street protests led by the non-parliamentary opposition and accusations of mistreatment by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) of those arrested for beating a journalist. Bokeria promised that all cases would be reviewed, but stressed to the Ambassador that Deputy Public Defender Giorgi Chkheidze had no credibility on this issue since he had also attempted to personally get over the fence into the police compound (Note: Chkheidze denied this claim; however, he did say he was at the police station as an observer. End Note.

¶7. (U) DASD Warlick has cleared this cable.
TEFFT